What Greening Your Pension Actually Achieves

Beyond the viral '21x' stat — the honest, defensible version of the impact.

Start with honesty about the famous number

You'll have seen the claim that greening your pension is "21x more powerful than going vegan, ditching flights and switching energy combined." It's a **single commissioned model** (Aviva/Route2 for Make My Money Matter, 2021); the academic who reviewed it called it "indicative" and didn't check the calculations. It's fine to mention *with attribution*, but don't build your case on it — there's a stronger, more defensible story.

Three things greening your pension genuinely does

- **It stops you bankrolling expansion.** The average UK saver has roughly £3,000 of their pension in fossil fuels (Make My Money Matter estimate). Moving to a fossil-free fund takes your money out of the companies opening new oil and gas fields the IEA says aren't needed.
- **It cuts your own financial risk.** This is the underrated one. Up to 60–80% of fossil reserves are "unburnable" under climate targets, and a peer-reviewed study found over $1tn of stranded oil & gas value would fall mostly on pension-holders. Greening reduces your exposure to that — it's risk management, not just ethics.
- **It adds to the demand signal that actually moves capital.** This is where real-world impact lives. Individual divestment has a debated direct effect on share prices — but collective demand has already put roughly £1.5 trillion of UK pensions on a net-zero track (Make My Money Matter), and pushed providers like Scottish Widows to shift £2bn of default money. Your switch is one vote in the only mechanism proven to move the system: the demand that greens defaults.

The honest framing for your content

Don't claim "I personally cut X tonnes of CO_2." The defensible claim is stronger: **"I stopped funding fossil-fuel expansion, cut my own stranded-asset risk, and added to the collective demand that's already redirected £1.5 trillion."** That can't be waved away as greenwash — and it's true.

General information, not financial advice. Sources: Make My Money Matter (2021 '21x' model and 2023/25 reports — campaign estimates); IEA Net Zero by 2050; Carbon Tracker; Nature Climate Change (2022); coverage of Scottish Widows' default shift. The '21x' and '£1.5tn' figures are campaign/estimate figures — attribute them.